

## Do I have to give my name?

The call taker may ask the caller's name and phone number in case we have to call you back, or the responders need to talk to someone who actually saw what happened. You are not required to give your name.

## Now what happens?

Your call is sent to the police, fire or emergency medical dispatcher. The call taker may ask you to stay on the line to continue to update information for in-progress incidents or to give instructions on what to do until help arrives.

## When will help arrive?

The time it takes for a responder to arrive after your call depends on several factors. All calls are given a priority based upon the incident type and whether or not the incident is in progress or just happened. The priorities assigned are determined by the responding agency, not by the 911 call taker. For instance, a shooting or fight call takes priority over a loud party or parking complaint. Other factors may include driving conditions, how far the responding unit is from the incident location and how busy the responding agency is at that time. As a result, calls of a lower priority may have to wait.

## Cell Phones

Over one half of 911 calls come from cell phones. Cell calls within Erie County are answered at a central answering point. You may be transferred to the appropriate agency after your location is verified. Cell phone location information technology is not an exact science. 911 call takers know your cell number, the address of the cell tower and your **approximate** location. Be sure to give the 911 call taker your location as well as the number from which you are calling.

## Tips for calling 911

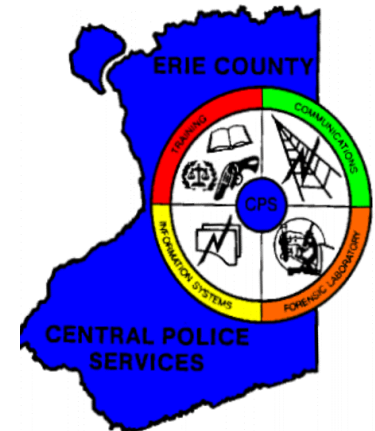
- ◆ State the location where responders are needed
- ◆ Briefly describe the incident
- ◆ Try to remain calm
- ◆ Listen to what the 911 call taker asks you to do
- ◆ Do not hang up until instructed to do so



# The Facts About 9-1-1

## What Everyone Should Know

## About the 9-1-1 System



**Mark Poloncarz, Erie County Executive**

**John Glascott, Commissioner**

## What happens when I dial 911?

When you call 911, your call is answered by a civilian call taker whose first responsibility is to find out if this is a true emergency—someone is injured, a crime is in progress, there is a fire, etc. For non-emergencies, call your police agency's seven digit phone number.

When you dial 911, the following information\* about where you are is immediately available to the call takers. For 911 calls, the phone company provides:

- ◆ The calling phone number
- ◆ The address or location of the phone
- ◆ Who owns the phone
- ◆ Which emergency responder serves that area

\*This information is provided for landlines but does not include cell phone or voice over internet protocol (VOIP) phones.

**IMPORTANT!** The location must always be verified by the call taker! Phone company information can occasionally be incorrect. Cell phone calls display only the address of the cell tower. Voice over internet phone location information is not always accurate. It may display your residence's location information when you may be accessing the internet at another location to call 911. It is vital to notify your VOIP provider with accurate address information if you move or change location. Your call to 911 may not reflect accurate information even after notification until your provider updates their database. You may be calling to report an incident occurring elsewhere, so the call taker will ask specific location information.

## What questions will I be asked?

The call taker is required to ask several questions in order to give responders an accurate picture of the situation. **It is important to understand that responders may be on the way while you are still talking to the call taker.** The call taker can update information and relay it to the dispatcher who then can relay it to the responders.

The call-taker needs to ask the basic 4 W's for every call: Where, What, Who, and When...

**Where?** This may include more detailed information than just the street address. The information should include apartment number, floor, suite number, or even the color of your house. Especially important is the nearest intersection, or cross-street, to the address. This makes it easier and quicker for responders to find you.

**What?** This is the basic information defining the nature of the incident. Be specific about the immediate problem. Are you in physical danger? Is the incident in progress? Are weapons involved? Is there a fire? Or do you just need information or a referral? **Try to remain as calm as possible.** It can make the process longer if the call taker is trying to understand an excited or hysterical caller.

**Who?** This is to identify suspects. It can include physical and clothing descriptions, names (if known), vehicle description and last known location or direction of travel.

**When?** It makes a difference if the incident is in progress, just occurred or happened sometime ago. A specific time frame is important for appropriate response.

## What information should I provide?

Depending on the nature of the incident you are calling about, you may be asked to provide specific information, such as:

### POLICE CALLS

suspect description and/or vehicle information;  
information about weapons or intoxicated persons, for officer safety;

whether or not you wish to speak with the officers in person. If you do not wish to speak with the police, please let the call taker know.

### FIRE CALLS

what exactly is burning, and whether or not flames are visible or just a smoke odor;  
if there is anyone trapped or injured.

NOTE: If you are reporting a fire, you may be told to leave the burning structure immediately. **DO NOT GO BACK INSIDE FOR ANY REASON!** Be prepared to tell the firefighters where any hazards or trapped persons are located.

### EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES (EMS) CALLS

Age of the victim

If the victim is conscious and their breathing status  
The chief complaint (difficulty breathing, bleeding, chest pains, general illness, etc.)

You may be asked if you know CPR. In some cases you may be given instructions on what you can do to help the victim until the responders arrive, including CPR.